

VZCZCXRO7241  
RR RUEHLH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHIL #0820 0571149  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 261149Z FEB 08  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5368  
INFO RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 4161  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 9075  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 4923  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 3614  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2886

UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 000820

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN: ADDITIONAL AI OUTBREAK IN POULTRY IN KARACHI

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Pakistani authorities confirmed on February 23 an outbreak of avian influenza (AI) in poultry on a commercial breeding farm in Karachi. To date this season, 106,000 chickens have died from the disease or been culled in nine separate poultry outbreaks. There are currently no suspected cases of AI in humans. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Pakistan's National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza (NRLAI) confirmed on February 23 the presence of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza (AI) at a commercial poultry farm in Karachi. The farm, located in Gadap near the Malir River, commercially raised six-week old broiler birds. 1,000 birds died from the infection and an additional 5,000 were culled prior to the confirmation of H5N1.

¶3. (SBU) According to the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), the owner of the infected farm preemptively culled 4,500 of his birds before animal health workers arrived to begin quarantine procedures. The bird carcasses were reportedly dumped into a well near the infected farm. This practice represents a deviation from standard Government of Pakistan (GOP) quarantine procedures. Animal and human health authorities report that there are currently no suspected human cases associated with the Karachi outbreak.

¶4. (SBU) The Karachi outbreak is the ninth confirmed poultry outbreak in Pakistan during the 2007 - 2008 migratory bird season, with more than 106,000 birds dead or culled so far. The last reported outbreak in Pakistan occurred on February 17 in Abbottabad, 100 kilometers to the north of Islamabad. This is also the third confirmed outbreak in Karachi in 2008, following two confirmed outbreaks on February 1 and 7.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Poultry outbreaks are historically first reported in the north of country, gradually spreading south to the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. The Islamabad-based National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza (NRLAI) is Pakistan's only laboratory capable of diagnosing H5N1 in poultry. Time delays between suspected outbreaks and laboratory confirmation are commonplace. As quarantine measures are undertaken only following official H5N1 confirmation, the sample/confirmation delay dramatically increases the risk that the disease will spread before quarantine measures can be enacted. Increased testing capacity in Pakistan's veterinary labs, particularly in Karachi, would increase the GOP's ability to better contain the virus, particularly in the south. End Comment.

